

# Boy and farmer essay



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In the story " Kansas," Stephen Dobyns tells how one boy's journey through life cost him his own life in the end. It starts with a boy trying to get from his school in Oklahoma back to summer school. He is hitchhiking on some back-country roads in Kansas, and to his surprise his life would change forever.

Dobyns is a very intelligent author and writer, as you can see from this great story; he is a well known writer of novels, short stories, poetry books and essays. Also he has numerous literary awards and has taught at many universities. I look forward to reading many more of his stories, and maybe a novel or two.

The main character is a nineteen year old boy, a middle child trying to get somewhere in life, besides the small town he is from. He has plans of one day being a great pianist in far away places, like playing one day at Carnegie Hall. He is caught in a conflict, within himself. His dreams flash before his eyes, when he is picked up by farmer in a Ford pickup. Whom he soon realizes has an agenda of his own, to kill two people who has crossed him, the boy is too scared to try to talk the man out of it, so he sits in silence. The boy only answers questions slowly and with little words.

The farmer is a nice looking man, maybe in his forty's, his skin was leathered colored from the sun. He had a forty-five revolver lying on the seat next to him; he was looking for a blue Plymouth coupe, which had his wife and her lover in it. And the farmer the antagonist of the story, telling the boy of his plan to kill them both for betraying him and now he was stuck in the middle. He wanted to know if the boy had seen it pass, the boy answers yes, it went by half an hour ago. The boy frightened by the site of the gun, could barely speak.

The boy being the protagonist of the story wants to try to talk the farmer out of his plans to kill his wife and her lover, but the boy is too afraid of agitating the farmer more or worse, getting shot himself. He struggles within thinking of reasons the farmer should not continue on the journey. He struggles to let the words out, but is still too afraid to talk the farmer out of it. As the conflict within is getting worse as the farmer drives faster and faster the boy realizes he may never get to those far away places he once dreamed of. How his life could change so quickly, in the hands of a stranger.

The young boy sitting and waiting in fear to catch up to the coupe, but it never happened; eventually he was let off in the next town with the promise of never telling the police or anyone else. He has kept that promise; but he takes the time to check the newspapers twice a day, trying to see if there was any news of a killing, but there is nothing. It is easy to relate to the boy, because we have all been in situations that are frightening, and we wish later we would have said this, or did that differently. The farmer is a character who feels betrayed, so he has a plan to find his wife.

He can't get the police involved, he says because "it's his wife", and "It's his problem", he will take care of it in his own way, by killing her. He feels when you have something wicked in your life "you stomp it out" so he plans on it. The farmer driving in the middle of the road, doing fifty or more miles an hour, trying to catch up to the coupe, but it never happens. He is hurt that his wife would leave him for another man. Maybe the other man had money, with his little two door coupe, and the farmer didn't, because of the hard times the world was in.

At this particular period in time (1929), it was the Great Depression, the worse economic collapse in modern history. Many people were unemployed, farmer had millions of acres of grassland, the rain stopped, and it was known as the Dust Bowl. No crops, just bare fields that lasted for miles, when the winds picked up the dust just blew everywhere. There was no hope for the farmers, most moved to Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado. In hopes of rain and rich plentiful soil to grow abundant crops, and get out of the economic hard times farmers were all in.

The boy was burdened by the decision that he made that day, not to say anything. He could have tried to save the farmers' wife by calming the farmer but he was too afraid of what the outcome would be. The boys' decision of not talking about the incident to anyone until he was on his own death bed to his two sons affected him. All the boy did was thought about what happened that day to himself for the rest of his life. He made it an inner conflict by holding it inside himself. Maybe he was a person that is true to his words.

He kept his promise to the farmer. He did not tell the police nor did he tell anyone about that day. He went to college at the University of Oklahoma and had plans of going to New York City to play piano in Carnegie Hall. He never made it to Carnegie hall; his piano playing was never good enough. He was no longer a boy, he was a man in the war, he got married, had two sons. He then moved to Michigan, he became a teacher, and then a minister. He then one day told his two sons of the story of the farmer, they too wondered if he ever found his wife.

The boy now 79 had fallen ill, between his morphine and his age, he was thinking back to that Kansas summer and of what could have happened. Still conflicted within about his inability to help the farmer do the right thing, trying to figure out what if anything he could have done. He has never let that day get to far from his mind; he dreamed different endings to that horrible day. First, he dreamed they caught to her and the man; they were half naked on the side of the road. The farmer pulls out his gun and aims it at the man. The boy told the farmer “ No! the farmer shot the man in the head, and then he shot his wife, and finally himself. And the boy cried “ No, no! ” Second, he dreamed he talked the farmer into going to the police. He talked to all the way to town, they went to the police station, gave them the gun, and told what happened. The police said they would “ get her back,” “ Wife stealing is not permitted around here. ” And the ending was good, no one was harmed and the boy had the courage to stand up to the farmer and resolve the situation. Third, he dreamed of the farmer getting to town, the boy jumping out, and running to the police.

Later the farmer is killed by the police in town. Fourth, the farmer drives to the train station, all the while the boy trying to talk him out of killing. They find the wife and her lover, the boy jumps between them; the farmer shoots him in the arm and the small of the back. And he is the only one that gets hurt in this scenario. The boy is now a man and after all his morphine his stories are all done, he thinks of no more. He has finally died, keeping his word to the farmer to never tell the police. He only confided in his two sons, which told no one.

His inner conflict is now over and the boy, now a man, had passed on. Only to keep the story of that day on the back-country roads in Kansas, when his life changed in an instant, to just a mere story he told his two sons, when he fell ill. Never to be thought of as the truth, the morphine in all probability was making him say these things. We can truly never know what happened that day or if any thing happened that day at all. Maybe the story was an ill old mans way to get through the dying process. The story had foreshadowing and flashbacks, which keep the story interesting.

Its resolution was very important in this story, the boy being a man finally thought of all the possibilities that could have happened to end the story. It's up to use the reader to pick the one that suits us the best. If the story happened at all, but at least there are several possibilities to choose from. I really liked this story, we all have conflict we deal with daily, some more important than others. But none the less, its how we deal with the situation at the time that counts; going back later to say I should have said that or did this isn't helpful in the end.